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1	IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
2	SOUTHERN DIVISION
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4	In Re: FLINT WATER CASES Case No. 16-10444
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7	STATUS CONFERENCE BEFORE THE HONORABLE JUDITH E. LEVY
·	UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
8	and THE HONORABLE JOSEPH J. FARAH
9	GENESEE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE
10	Virtual Hearing Via Zoom - Wednesday, February 24, 2021
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22					
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Wednesday, February 24, 2021
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              2:05 p.m.
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              THE CLERK OF THE COURT: The United States District
 4
    Court for the Eastern District of Michigan is now in session.
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    The Honorable Judith E. Levy presiding, joined by the Honorable
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 7
    Joseph J. Farah of Genesee County Circuit Court. Calling the
 8
    Flint Water cases.
 9
              JUDGE LEVY: All right. Well, welcome, everyone.
              And welcome, Judge Farah.
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11
              JUDGE FARAH: Thank you, Judge Levy.
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              JUDGE LEVY: It's good to see you.
              JUDGE FARAH: You, too.
13
              JUDGE LEVY: And Judge Farah's law clerk, Samantha
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    Weinstein, has moved on to another job in California. So we
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    regret that she's not here with us.
16
              But it's great to see you, Judge Farah.
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              JUDGE FARAH: Thank you.
18
              JUDGE LEVY: And does every- -- there's still one
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20
    individual here who who's named "Counsel with Panelist
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    Permission." If everybody could turn their ...
              If you could, please turn your cameras on. Then we'll
22
    know who everyone is and we'll be able to tell ..
23
              MR. STERN: So, Judge, earlier today on behalf of
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    Mr. Cuker I sent an E-mail to Ms. Calhoun and there were two
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There was Mr. Cuker and then there was a Mr. Bened --
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             MR. BENEDETTO: Benedetto. Good afternoon, Your
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            I am present. I will just be observing. I will shut
 3
    my camera off and I'll mute my audio.
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              JUDGE LEVY: Who are you? I didn't hear who you said
 5
    you are.
 6
             MR. BENEDETTO: This is Conrad Benedetto. I'm an
 7
 8
    attorney in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
             JUDGE LEVY: Mr. Benedetto, have you filed an
 9
    appearance in the case?
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11
             MR. BENEDETTO: Yes, Your Honor.
12
             JUDGE LEVY: Okay, terrific. But could you still,
    please, change the name on the pane.
13
             What you do is you take your cursor and you do the
14
    right click. Or if you're on a Mac you probably click on the
15
16
    something and it will say "rename".
         (No response.)
17
              JUDGE LEVY: Okay. We'll do it for you.
18
             MR. BENEDETTO: Yeah. You're talking to a computer
19
20
    idiot, Your Honor. I apologize.
              JUDGE LEVY: I think I've discerned that.
21
    okay. That's okay. We all have different strengths that we
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23
    bring to all our endeavors.
             We still have other people with that identity and it's
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    important for us to know who is present. Because inevitably,
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individuals who are not planning to speak do speak and we just
need a record. We're just a court of public record.
record what we do and we might just have to remove people who
we're not able to identify.
         MR. STERN: Mr. Benedetto, before you put your name in
your box it said "Panelist with Counsel Permission" or "Counsel
with Panelist Permission" and there's two other individuals, it
looks like, with that designation in their box. Are there
other lawyers from your firm that have logged in?
         MR. BENEDETTO: Not that I'm aware of.
         JUDGE LEVY: We'll just remove those people.
     (A brief discussion was held off the record.)
         JUDGE LEVY: So we're now on the record. And we are
trying to make sure the record reflects those who are actually
participating as counsel in this case. And there's one
individual whose video is turned off and microphone is turned
off and they were given the initial name "Counsel with Panelist
Permission," and they've elected not to -- they're apparently
not listening or don't know how to use the computer at all.
they are not following the Court's request which is to unmute
and turn the video on so we know who it is. So the record
won't reflect they're here and, apparently, they probably
aren't here. So I'm going to ask my law clerk to remove that
person from the hearing.
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And then we've got Mr. Wise who we know is counsel in

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this case and, apparently, he's not present either or his
microphone and his camera won't work. So there's no point in
him participating either. So we're going to remove Mr. Wise.
         There, wait. He just turned his microphone on.
         Mr. Wise?
         MR. WISE: (No response.)
         JUDGE LEVY: All right. Well, something's not working
and we all have those days where our computers don't work.
                                                           So
we'll assume that is what is going on with Mr. Wise.
         So thank you all for participating in this effort to
figure out who is here. We are continually trying to modify
our Zoom protocols so that we can be as absolutely productive
as we can possibly be. So we'll just keep working on it.
         MR. STERN: Judge Levy?
         JUDGE LEVY: Yes?
         MR. STERN: Susan Smith has sent me a note that she is
the 443 phone number.
         JUDGE LEVY: Oh, good.
         MR. STERN:
                    She's muted. But she's here and she's
identified herself as that.
         JUDGE LEVY: Okay. But does she want to be in the
hearing?
         MR. STERN: I believe she does. She's muted right now
and cannot unmute. But that's how she is logged in, I guess,
is by phone.
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              JUDGE LEVY: Okay.
              MR. STERN: So, yes. She just said yes. So she hears
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 3
    you.
              JUDGE LEVY:
                          Yeah. So, Leslie, let's add Ms. Smith.
 4
         (Ms. Smith added to Zoom hearing.)
 5
              JUDGE LEVY: Thank you.
 6
 7
              Okay. Well, now let's get on with the business of the
 8
    day.
              I want to officially welcome Judge Farah again to the
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10
    hearing. And some counsel on our hearing have been through
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    quite a bit with the weather in Texas and I just want to
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    express that throughout I had those who I know in Texas,
    including those counsel on my mind, and was always concerned
13
    and I'm just glad to see that everything is at least coming
14
    back to normal somewhat in the state and that you're safe and
15
16
    healthy.
              So, again, the recording is prohibited of this and
17
    that includes screenshots and so on that would be submitted to
18
    the press or anything else. So all video, audio or the still
19
20
    photos and screenshots are prohibited.
21
              So let's move to the agenda. And the first item on
22
    the agenda related to clarification requests I received from
23
    the VNA defendants regarding motions for summary judgment in
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    the bellwether cases. And we had a pre-meeting, what I call
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    it, in chambers earlier today. And this is just a sort of
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procedural issue to make sure that when the motions are filed, the short form complaints match up with the counts in the long form complaints. But we got that resolved and I think we know how to proceed with that and there wouldn't be any need for further clarification.

In terms of the second item, VNA had also requested some discussion and resolution of another case management sort of issue which is that there were a good number of motions to dismiss based on statute of limitation issues related to the adult plaintiffs in a number of cases that Mr. Shkolnik had filed.

That issue got resolved but there are still minors in those cases that were not impacted by the resolution of the statute of limitations issues. So there are two groups of minors. Some are going to have the complaints answered and others are going to be subject to further motions to dismiss that do not involve the statute of limitations. So I have requested that there simply be a stipulated order submitted regarding when the answers can be prepared in those cases so we'll know when to expect them as well as when the motions to dismiss for the remaining minors would be filed. So that's good to have resolved. So thank you for working on that.

MR. CAMPBELL: Your Honor, this is James Campbell.

JUDGE LEVY: Sure.

MR. CAMPBELL: Just a very brief point of

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clarification there. The motions to dismiss have already been
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            They're on file with the courts.
 2
              JUDGE LEVY: Oh.
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              MR. CAMPBELL: I think, perhaps, I can volunteer to
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    identify those plaintiff names and those pending motions just
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    so Your Honor is aware of them.
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              JUDGE LEVY: That would be good.
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              MR. CAMPBELL: And, again, there's no issue with the
    decision. We just wanted a point of clarity and we'll also
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    identify and submit a stipulation for the plaintiffs that
11
    require an answer.
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              Thank you very much, Your Honor.
              JUDGE LEVY: Okay.
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              MR. SHKOLNIK: Your Honor, if I can just -- this is
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    Hunter Shkolnik again. Mr. Wise is on and he is having audio
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16
    problems.
              JUDGE LEVY: Oh.
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              MR. SHKOLNIK: He couldn't get through. I just wanted
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    to let you know that.
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              JUDGE LEVY: Thank you.
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              Sorry, Mr. Wise, if I was being harsh.
              Okay. So then we had the issue, the third item on the
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    agenda relates to progress on the second round of bellwether
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    plaintiffs and their selection. And the 100 individuals --
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    it's now at 100 individuals who are completing fact sheets at
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1 this time and remaining dates will be triggered upon the 2 completion of that process. Do I have that correct, Mr. Campbell? 3 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, Your Honor. Thank you very 4 much. 5 MR. ERICKSON: Your Honor, this is Philip Erickson. 6 7 just want to mention with regard to agenda item number two, 8 that we're similarly situated with VNA and we'll be working 9 with Mr. Shkolnik to come up with an understanding as to when 10 our answers will be due in approximately 30 cases. 11 JUDGE LEVY: Thank you. Thank you. 12 And since you're there, Mr. Erickson, the fourth agenda item was submitted by LAN and it was seeking 13 clarification on the length of the corporate deposition that's 14 coming up, 30(b)(6) deposition. We did have some discussion in 15 16 the chambers conference. Partly, I do that because I want to be a little more prepared for what the issues are than just an 17 item on an agenda, a proposal that's submitted. And we had an 18 opportunity to pretty much run through this, that I don't think 19 20 needs to be repeated. But it was determined that the previous 21 ruling that I think was primarily issued by Judge Farah, that there would be 20 hours on the record at this 30(b)(6) 22 23 deposition. Of those 20 hours on the record, one and a half will be reserved for counsel who did not notice the deposition. 2.4

And if they also don't use that time, then it will revert to

those who did notice the deposition. 1 Also, LAN is producing two individuals to respond to 2 the 30(b)(6) deposition. So all of this has to be coordinated 3 over the course of the two different witnesses. 4 Is there anything further that's needed to clarify 5 that? 6 7 MR. ERICKSON: Not from our perspective, Your Honor. 8 And thank you for the clarification to both Judge Farah and 9 yourself. 10 JUDGE LEVY: Okay. And I do want to say to everybody 11 I realize that these depositions are long. They're stressful 12 to prepare for. They're stressful to be the witness or the lawyer defending and preparing the witness for the deposition. 13 So I am sympathetic to that and I think an enormous amount of 14 work has been accomplished in this case over the course of all 15 16 of these depositions and I just ask everybody to hang in there and be patient with one another and with your witnesses, of 17 course. 18 So we're now up to a report from Ms. Greenspan, who I 19 20 have to thank again for her enormous contribution to this case 21 without whom we just all wouldn't be here. Because she just 22 helps us all problem solve and troubleshoot. 23 So, thank you. MS. GREENSPAN: Thank you, Your Honor. 2.4

Yeah, I have a couple of items to report on today.

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I'm going to start with the -- what I normally give, an update on the submissions to the census to kind of give a flavor to everybody of what's been going on over the last month or so.

We continue to get new submissions. We got 430 new claims and 700 updates in the last couple of weeks. We have provided to the lawyers information about what we call duplicate claims. They're duplicate retentions. They're individuals who have -- who are identified by lawyers -- by different law firms as being their retained clients. So we have multiple instances of that and we've sent out three separate updates on these duplicate retentions on January 23rd, February 5th and February 19th. And there's about 3,000 individuals involved in these different, you know, what I'm going to call duplicate retentions.

So I know that lawyers are in the process of having discussions about how to resolve some of these, some of them will get resolved in the near future and some of them are going to take longer to resolve. But that is a process that is somewhat underway.

In terms of the total number of people identified, individuals identified in the census data, we are at about 26,692. That is after we account for the duplicate questions. So it's about where we were last time I gave a report. Because some have been withdrawn and some have been added and it sort of balanced out.

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Of those, I have about 10,784 that are children, minors. And I'm defining minors based on a date of birth after April 25th, 1996. So these are minors that would be -- they would have been minors at the time of the initial water switch. But they are -- many of them are not minors today. So it's just to be clear on what that definition is.

But in addition to the census information, as everybody knows, the process for registering for the settlement commenced on January 27th. So I have a couple of updates on that process and a couple of updates on the notice process.

So let me start with notice. Notice was mailed out to households in Flint starting on Friday, February 19th and it was completed on Monday, February 22nd. So the notices have all been distributed to the addresses that were made available to the notice administrator. There are 57,402 packages that were mailed out. So people should be receiving them this week, I assume. And maybe some people have already received their packages.

If people need, you know, more forms or more copies of the notice package, there are a couple of places to contact to get that information. I can state it right now on the record But perhaps there would be other places where this information is easily accessible.

So, first of all, there is a telephone number, an 800 number. It's 800-493-1734. There is a website: Official,

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Flint, Water, Settlement, dot com. That may be the easiest way for people to start to get information because that website has information on it and it also has contact information. people can request forms or find out how to request forms or look at the frequently asked questions section and they can also online register for the settlement, if they so desire. So those are two ways to go ahead and get more forms or more documents. Again, it's OfficialFlintWaterSettlement.com. And I think some people may need to get additional The package will only contain one registration form. But, of course, you can go online to fill out your registration or you can request additional forms to get them filled out and submit them in hard copy. What I want to talk about next is just a registration status. So as of Monday evening, so that is the day before yesterday, we had identified 15,568 unique registrants. There may be some people who registered more than once but in terms of -- after accounting for that, the unique registrants, Of those 11,641 are adults and 2,295 are minors. is a different definition of minors than the one I used in describing the census data. This is a minor as of now, basically. So as of the time they filed the registration. And then there are 1,632 people who didn't provide a date of birth. So we do not know who they are. We don't know if they are adults or minors.

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But I want to note that this is the number of registrations received before the notice packages have actually been received by people in the community. So now that these notice packages are out and people have them, I would expect that there would be an uptick in the registration process. I'll stop there in case there are any questions, Your Honor, if you wanted to raise anything. JUDGE LEVY: Are there -- no. I don't have any The registration period will last until Monday, questions. March 29th. So that's a date for any lawyers who are on the call considering assisting their client to register or anyone who is listening to the call. It's an important date to be aware of. MS. GREENSPAN: Your Honor, I do have something else to add to make clear to people who are participating in this hearing. The registration materials note certain kinds of documents that people should be submitting. For example, if you are a next friend, a parent of a minor child, there is a reference to submission of documents to identify yourself. But those are not being required at this stage in the process. So if people go ahead and register, they will have to supplement and provide those documents, but they don't have to do it in order to have the registration counted as timely. So I just wanted to make that clear. JUDGE LEVY: Okay.

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MS. GREENSPAN: And I believe that the claims administrator will be posting some information about that to clarify in case people are worried that they won't be timely because they haven't been able to get those documents. So just to clarify, the registration will still be considered timely and you'll have to supplement later with the appropriate documents.

JUDGE LEVY: That's helpful. Thank you.

I want to bring up a few other things related to the settlement process. And one is that I learned in our earlier meeting that counsel who are currently preparing their attorney fee requests need some additional time. It was to be submitted this Friday and instead will be submitted on Monday, March 8th. And there will be a stipulation submitted so that is reflected on the docket of the case.

I want to also let those who are present know that the issue that had been brought to the Court's attention regarding Attorney Loyst Fletcher has been resolved. He submitted a remedial letter for the Court's approval. Judge Farah and I had a chance to review it. We had some very small edits for it and provided it back to his counsel and those letters are now being sent out and will be completed by noon on Friday with daily reports by 5:00 p.m. each day on that progress.

And I wanted to also mention, I have received some correspondence from citizens and otherwise am following along

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the issue with respect to bone scans and their availability. And I have learned from our earlier meeting that Mr. Shkolnik and Mr. Napoli and their firm has a bone scan program, for lack of a better word, already up and running in Flint and they have made additional time available that other lawyers can use to schedule their clients for bone scans. And that's from 11:00 a.m. on each Sunday until 4:00 p.m. on Sundays. And there's an online scheduling platform for this opportunity, if people want to either get a bone scan or have a minor scanned.

And in order to make that known more widely than just to those represented by a lawyer, we're going to ask the Archer Company that's handling the mailing and registration process to post the link on their website. So anyone going to get further information from Archer would be able to see that link. So I just want to reiterate that that's a step, absolutely excellent step in the right direction of making this available to others and the online scheduling process will also be more widely known very soon. But in the short run, all of the lawyers here on the call or observing this know that they can use that process to schedule their clients.

Another issue I wanted to bring up is that I am currently reviewing the underwriters' motion to dismiss and the response and so on. It's fully briefed. And shortly I'll be able to figure out whether I would benefit from an oral argument on it and if so, then we will schedule it. So I just

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want you to know I haven't lost track of that. I also have the
EPA's motion for interlocutory appeal sitting on my desk inside
the computer and I have been looking at it and will do my best
to turn to that as well.
         Before I go over additional dates that have been set
aside for future hearings, Judge Farah, is there anything that
you want to bring to everyone's attention?
         JUDGE FARAH: No. Other than we owe some of you a
decision. It's being typed. It's being worked on.
hoping to have it out this Friday. And that should resolve,
for the time being at least, the AG's request for
reconsideration of Judge Yuille's order that he entered about
quite some time ago now. But the opinion is getting near done.
Hope to have it out to you by Friday. If not, it'll be out to
you by Monday.
         And that should be -- now, this is certainly not an
invitation. But I'm looking at my board and I don't have
anymore water motions on my board and let's hope we can keep it
          But in any event, the courtroom is always open to
     And if it's not, then I'll be happy to send you to Judge
Levy.
         JUDGE LEVY: Yeah. Well, I'll send you some of my
motions.
         JUDGE FARAH: All right.
         JUDGE LEVY: That seems fair. Your new intern Emily
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can start working on them.

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JUDGE FARAH: Don't send too many. She'll quit before she starts.

JUDGE LEVY: Let me also mention, Judge Farah, while you were speaking it occurred to me that you and I had a chance to meet and discuss the appointment of the Master Guardian ad Litem for the settlement process. And it was agreed upon to recommend that Miriam Wolock, who served sort of as a temporary GAL to assist me in reviewing the portion of the MSA related to minors. So it was agreed that she would be an ideal candidate for that position and she was very interested and engaged with the case and had read -- obviously, read the MSA very carefully, but is looking forward to that appointment.

JUDGE FARAH: She seems very excited about it. She's going to be great. We're all benefiting by having her.

JUDGE LEVY: Yeah. I think so.

The only other thing I have is I have set aside time on March 10th and March 24th at two o'clock, if there are discovery disputes that need to be addressed. And our next regular status conference would be April 7th. All of these on Wednesdays, also at two o'clock.

I was available on March 31st, but it turns out there's a deposition that day and I don't want to mess with the deposition schedule. And right now I think we're staying on top of the issues that have come up.

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So that will conclude what I have on the agenda,
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    unless I have missed something.
              MR. MONROE: Judge, this is Stephen Monroe for the
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    Washington plaintiffs. May I be heard on a topic?
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              JUDGE LEVY: What is the topic?
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              MR. MONROE: This falls within the upcoming deadlines
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 7
    on the agenda. I just want to address the 90-day deadline to
 8
    complete the scans that is in the grid.
              JUDGE LEVY: Uh-huh?
 9
              MR. MONROE: The upcoming April 21st deadline to
10
11
    complete bone scans. And there's a concern from my end and
    from others that the limited availability of scans makes that
12
    deadline pretty impractical for a large number of adults and
13
    children. So I was wondering how best to address that concern.
14
15
    I'm happy to bring a motion, but I wanted to bring that up
16
    now.
              JUDGE LEVY: Yeah. Well, you know, I was interested
17
    in knowing how many slots are available in the 11:00 a.m. to
18
    4:00 p.m. time frame.
19
20
              I think Mr. Lanciotti was going to look into that, if
21
    he could. Do you know --
              MR. CUKER: Your Honor -- I'm sorry. It's Mark Cuker.
22
23
    I'm looking at the website right now. There's no 11:00 a.m.
2.4
           The slots start at 1:00 p.m. to 3:45 and there's --
25
              MS. GREENSPAN: Your Honor, can I clarify?
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JUDGE LEVY: Yes, certainly. 1 MS. GREENSPAN: Okay. It started out with a 1:00 p.m. 2 to 4:00 p.m. schedule as the initial starting point, and it 3 will be expanded. If the schedule fills up, then they're going 4 expand the numbers of slots. It didn't fill up, you know, in 5 So there was only one day and there wasn't very the first day. 6 7 much notice of it. So that's understandable. So it's 32 scans 8 in a four-hour period. It can be expanded to a hundred a day. 9 JUDGE LEVY: Oh, terrific. So, Mr. Monroe, what I would urge you to do is see how 10 11 many of your clients you can get in. How many clients do you have? 12 MR. MONROE: We have -- currently, we're preparing to 13 register over a thousand this week. We have over 5,000 on the 14 census. My concern is that for a large majority of our clients 15 16 the scan might be the only way to prove any kind of damages on the grid. 17 JUDGE LEVY: Okay. Mr. Monroe, we're all aware of how 18 the grid works. So thank you for updating everybody on that. 19 20 And so what I urge you to do is get started signing them up. 21 There is an effort underway to expand to another bone scan -- additional bone scanning. So let's see how it goes. 22 Ι 23 think it's too early to say that we need more time.

comes to that, the demand is there. Certainly you could

contact all of the settling lawyers, see if they would agree to

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that, and then proceed from there if they don't with -- by
 1
    contacting co-liaison counsel for individuals and asking them
 2
    to submit such a motion.
 3
              MR. MONROE: Certainly, Judge. Thank you for your
 4
    time and guidance.
 5
              JUDGE LEVY: Sure.
                                  Thank you.
 6
 7
              Okay. Well, I think that that will conclude the
 8
    hearing today. I just encourage everybody to get on as many
 9
    lists to get vaccinated. I'm considering it my own personal
10
    duty to use the word "vaccine" every hour that I'm on the
11
    record with anyone because there's just so much misinformation
12
    about it. So I've got a one-person campaign to encourage
    everybody. Especially the criminal defendants on my docket.
13
    They're not here today, but I talk to them all day about it.
14
              So I hope that everybody's making progress as much as
15
16
    you can in your county with that, and I will see you all,
    potentially, on March 10th and the 24th, but certainly on April
17
    7th.
18
              So stay safe, everybody.
19
20
              And good to see you, Judge Farah.
21
              JUDGE FARAH: Thank you, Your Honor.
22
              JUDGE LEVY: Great. Okay.
23
         (At 2:41 p.m., matter concluded.)
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25
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CERTIFICATE

I, Darlene K. May, Official Court Reporter for the United States District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript, to the best of my ability, from the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter. I further certify that the transcript fees and format comply with those prescribed by the Court and the Judicial Conference of the United States.

12 <u>February 28, 2021</u> Date /s/ Darlene K. May. CSR

Darlene K. May, CSR, RPR, CRR, RMR Federal Official Court Reporter Michigan License No. 6479